



2ND ANNUAL Art from the Unknown

Self-portrait

Nearly 700 people came out for the opening night of the three day Art from the Unknown show held just before Christmas. The crowd at the second annual show milled comfortably around the large space of the Strathcona Arts Barns. It was a sociable event as people enjoyed the art work and visited. Some 80 artists had works of all kinds in the show. Paintings and drawings predominated, but the styles, sizes and media covered a full gamut of possibilities.

The show was again organized by Raj Pannu, MLA for Edmonton Strathcona, and was principally orchestrated by the indefatigable Flo Pastoor, Pannu's constituency assistant.

The show is all about "giving artists that are marginalized, certainly financially marginalized, a chance to go public and be seen," says Pastoor. "It's not just a show. It's about fighting for a little elbow room for people who need to be different."

One artist wrote to Pastoor, saying: "I have truly enjoyed this event, it's been a long, lonely journey so far and it's nice to mix with my fellow artists."

Sales, cheer and some song

Many of the artists sold their work, which no doubt cheered many artistic households at Christmas.



The Happy Greek
by Margaret Rees



welcome from Raj Pannu, and a short talk from new Alberta senator Doug Roche.

With two successes under its belt, Pastoor says the Art from the Unknown show will continue, perhaps forming its own independent society to prepare and host the event. ♦ **Keith Wiley**



Flo Pastoor and
MLA Raj Pannu
were thrilled by
the crowd that
came out for
the show.

Our Voice

the spare change magazine

JANUARY 1999 Vol. 6 No. 1
SOLD BY DONATION
Please buy only from badge vendors.
Your vendor pays 60¢ per copy.

Art from the Unknown

"Morning Daily"
by Jasmine Pin



Born Free!
Winnipeg activists challenge
panhandling by law.
See page 4

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an income opportunity for
economically marginalized people in
our society while communicating
about their issues to the public.

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Jasmine can be reached at 475-6820.

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FOR THE HOMELESS IN RED DEER

Central Alberta's People's Place

Bringing Red Deer's homeless in out of the cold

BY MICHAEL WALTERS

When we think of the homeless, wandering cold and hungry through city streets sleeping in the warmest and driest places they can find, the image of the skid rows and darkened alleys of the big cities come to mind. In Edmonton and Calgary, our major Alberta urban centres, homelessness is always on the rise.

Rarely do we consider homelessness an issue in small communities. Mostly it's not there. If it is, it's hidden or people who find themselves destitute will move on looking for greener pastures or a place where there are more services and options for the poor.

With the unfortunate trend of poverty and homelessness here in Alberta, the effects of these societal woes are now being felt in smaller communities.

In April of 1998, Red Deer, a city of 60,000, opened its first shelter for homeless people.

"The real problem here is not just the lack of affordable housing, but a lack of housing period," says Laurie Smith, a community outreach worker at the shelter. "People were camping in the ravine...since we opened we have seen more than two hundred and fifty people come through our doors...we're always full."

Central Alberta's People's Place is a twelve room facility, but on most nights they accommodate more than fifteen people who have nowhere else to go. It's still not good enough.

"I would really like to see an overnight shelter open for people in Red Deer. At least for the winter months," says Smith.

"We assess how long someone will be able to stay based on how hard they work toward their independence," says Janis



Laurie Smith, outreach worker, left, and Janis Davidson, the director, right, with client Ernesto. At right, one of the rooms at Central Alberta's People's Place.



money and with nowhere to go. They weren't even able to return to where they came from.

"People came to Red Deer thinking they would have it made, unfortunately no one planned for failure and they were stuck. It happened to a lot of people," says Smith.

"We're glad we've been able to help a lot of people. We've had a lot of support from the community at large. We're always getting donations; food, clothes, money. It's great," says Davidson. "The community recognized the need and we've acted on it."

Red Deer is not the only smaller Alberta city to have recognized the need. Shelters for the homeless have opened in Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie and Lethbridge. ♦

WORDS ON THE STREET

BY KASIAN GIRASEK

Well here we are. Another year has gone by. I want to thank all of the people out there who have supported the **Our Voice** vendors, mostly by allowing us a chance to regain some dignity. In some cases your support and encouragement has given many of us the courage to try and re-enter the work-force. Although I have tried three times in the past two years and failed, I will continue to try. Again thanks for the encouragement.



when we decide to speak out will only call or write the head office of these retailers if we don't like the way that we are being treated by a store or a policy put in place. But should we agree with a store's efforts, no matter if it's to improve our shopping experience or to reach out and help the community as a whole, it seems that no one will call with positive reinforcement.

Our Voice vendors have suffered because the negative always outweighs the positive. The people who have been accosted by troublesome vendors have called and complained, but those people who have had nothing but positive experiences with **Our Voice** vendors have not called to praise us.

This brings me to the second part of this problem; policing the paper. It is a hard problem. Most of us vendors are trying to do a job and be respectable. If you are being accosted by someone selling the

paper, we would like you to take the time to get their badge number and call the **Our Voice** distribution office at 423-2285. Your help in this matter is important toward eliminating the vendors who refuse to be respectful of the public or our rules. Those vendors who stick the paper in your face, smell strongly like alcohol or act aggressively and unfriendly toward you are having a serious negative effect on the rest of us.

So if you see a vendor who is not wearing a blue **Our Voice** identification tag, please do not buy **Our Voice** from him. If you see a vendor who is wearing the blue tag, but who is acting unprofessionally, please, again call the **Our Voice** office and let us know. This is very important to all those vendors who work hard to serve the public as respectfully and politely as we can, while we try to put bread on our tables and improve our lives. ♦

NABIS

Coping with brain injury

continued from back cover.

(continued from back) Men 18-24 are statistically at greatest risk of brain injury. Car accidents, falls, sports, and industrial accidents are all most likely to hurt younger men. But strokes and aneurisms affect older people and can cause serious changes. So can near drowning, heart attack, or any severe trauma that causes anoxia, a shortage of oxygen to the brain.

NABIS works closely with the Glen Rose Rehabilitation Hospital. The Society helps people re-integrate with their families, friends and society. Individual counselling, family counselling and regular meetings of support groups are all parts of the work. Gietz says that families of survivors of injury are often delighted to compare notes and see that others have similar problems coping. They have run groups for parents who are survivors and are raising families.

The Society also has its hand in organizing art shows of the work of survivors, referring people to employment or useful volunteer positions and assisting in research on brain injury.

A professional staff of caseworkers at NABIS coordinates with a large volunteer team to provide a variety of services through the office, including the recently initiated Brain Injury Help Line (474-5678).

NABIS works with recent survivors and often with people, like Marjorie, who may have been injured many years ago. One of the longer term consequences of injury is a gradual decay of the brain. Everyone's brain deteriorates a bit with age, but the process goes more quickly for some people with brain injury. So Marjorie, who suffers from deterioration, now finds herself less able to cope. She's turned to NABIS for counselling and help.



Jim Powder, right, won the pool tournament at the Neighbourhood Activity Centre, a drop-in and socializing project of NABIS. NAC director, Kathy Munro, left, presented the prizes.

Poverty is often one of the consequences of an injury.

Because they are unable to work, people with brain injuries often end up on disability pensions, or social services or AISH (Assured Income Support for the Handicapped). As Marjorie Rowe says, "If you go from welfare to AISH, from \$400 and something to \$800 and something a month, you think you're rich." But getting the financial support is not easy, because brain injury is often an invisible disability. The medical evidence on brain injury is growing, but Rachel Gietz explains that most disability claim forms have questions like, "Can you walk? Can you feed yourself?"

Marjorie said it can be difficult to go from social services support to AISH, as AISH often doesn't recognize brain injury as a handicap. "You can't see the injury," Marjorie points out. But, Rachel Gietz points out that there is growing recognition of the disabling power of brain injury.

Advocacy work is a big part of what counsellors at NABIS do. It might mean helping with banking, or negotiating with the Workers' Compensation board, or social services. With other service organizations, Gietz says, NABIS provides education about brain injuries and what survivors of the injury need for support.

Many survivors of injury go on to productive roles in society, often as volunteers. "This is a cultural thing," says Gietz. "People can be very productive and contribute a great deal. But we have a marketplace that depends on speed or full-day employment."

Survivors of brain injury face hostility from many sides, because they are different. Rowe says it's like "being treated like a sub-human." At NABIS, she says, she feels welcomed and accepted. ♦

VENDORS' CHRISTMAS

An Our Voice vendor Christmas

There was turkey, there were all the fixings, even a visit from the big fella in the red hat with a cart load of presents. We had the new-fangled Christmas sounds of C-men and the Raging Blues band. This was the 1998 annual **Our Voice** vendors' Christmas party.

This year the party was organized in part by the Holy Spirit Lutheran Church from South Edmonton. Mills and Carole Parker lead the large group that

arranged to have all the glorious food donated, prepared and served to more than 50 vendors and their families.

"All the participants from our group felt rewarded for the experience. And there was genuine acknowledgement from the vendors who seemed to really appreciate the recognition they were given for their efforts," said Mills.

Each year 200-300 people pass through the **Our Voice** office, looking for a way to make some money, a way to get back on their feet or even a sense of hope, a place where they can talk to a friend. Each year these people who sell **Our Voice** for any of these reasons deserve recognition and reward for their efforts to get back in control of their lives.

Our Voice would like to thank all of those people who volunteered their time and efforts to give the vendors a wonderful afternoon filled with good food and entertainment.

Lewis Sampson from the Heritage Garden Market I.G.A. at 2011-111 Street.

Randy Sieben from the Lansdowne Garden Market I.G.A. at 5120-122 Street.

Lorne Davis from the Southgate/Pleasantview Garden Market I.G.A. at 11080-51 Avenue.

Cliff Chow from Cliff's I.G.A. at 12147-82 Street.

As well a big thanks from **Our Voice** and the vendors goes out to Mills and Carole Parker and the whole group from the Holy Spirit Lutheran Church and to all the other volunteers who helped out. ♦



Vendor Donna Randall sure looked to be enjoying a wonderful Christmas party!



Mills and Carole Parker, the great volunteers who put together the **Our Voice** vendors' Christmas party.

EDMONTON'S 100% INDEPENDENT NEWS & ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

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Born Free!

Winnipeg activists challenge panhandling by-law and \$1,000 fines.

BY RODNEY GRAHAM

Winnipeg, M.B. - After City Hall was threatened with court action by the National Anti-Poverty Organization, because the panhandling by-law would violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, City Hall has decided to commence dialogue regarding the matter and may possibly revise the by-law.

According to Arthur Shafer, Director of the Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics at the University of Manitoba, and Arne Peltz, (the lawyer representing N.A.P.O. and the twenty panhandlers who have been charged under the by-law), the group of social rights activists will commence with legal proceedings if council does not meet with them in January of 1999 to hash out amendments to the four year old by-law.

Ottawa, Brandon, Oshawa, and Sudbury have by-laws that ban all panhandling. Kingston, Oshawa, and Charlottetown have enacted by-laws against gathering and loitering. Toronto is considering whether or not to follow Winnipeg's lead, (as Vancouver has); enacting by-laws against panhandling and squeegeeing.

The only difference between the latter two cities is that Vancouver deals with both panhandling and squeegeeing with one by-law, whereas Winnipeg has a separate by-law to deal with each. Violators of the panhandling by-law in Winnipeg face a \$1000 fine, six months in jail - or both.

Top Down or Bottom Up

Arthur Shafer has written a paper for the Caledon Institute, a social policy think tank - 11 Down and out in Winnipeg and Toronto: The ethics of legislation against panhandling. His paper was written with the thought of using it in the court challenge if need be.

Two interesting considerations in the paper are the "top down" method, and the "bottom up" preference for dealing with panhandlers. In the top down argument, only the strong arm of the law will solve the 'problem'. Handcuffs not handouts are the solution. Shafer calls this method coercion.

In the bottom up approach, what is argued for is not brute force, but humanity. This approach recognizes the complexity of the situation - and handles it accordingly. This method considers a variety of factors in its solution: Income redistribution, housing, the fact that people live on half the amount of money they actually need to survive ...

Bottom uppers argue that panhandling is both a relief valve, a means by which a poor soul can manage without crime, and it is also a form of expression that we, as a democratic society, should fight for...

By using the top down way, we will just be pushing one set of desperate people aside temporarily while another set takes their place...and on, and on.

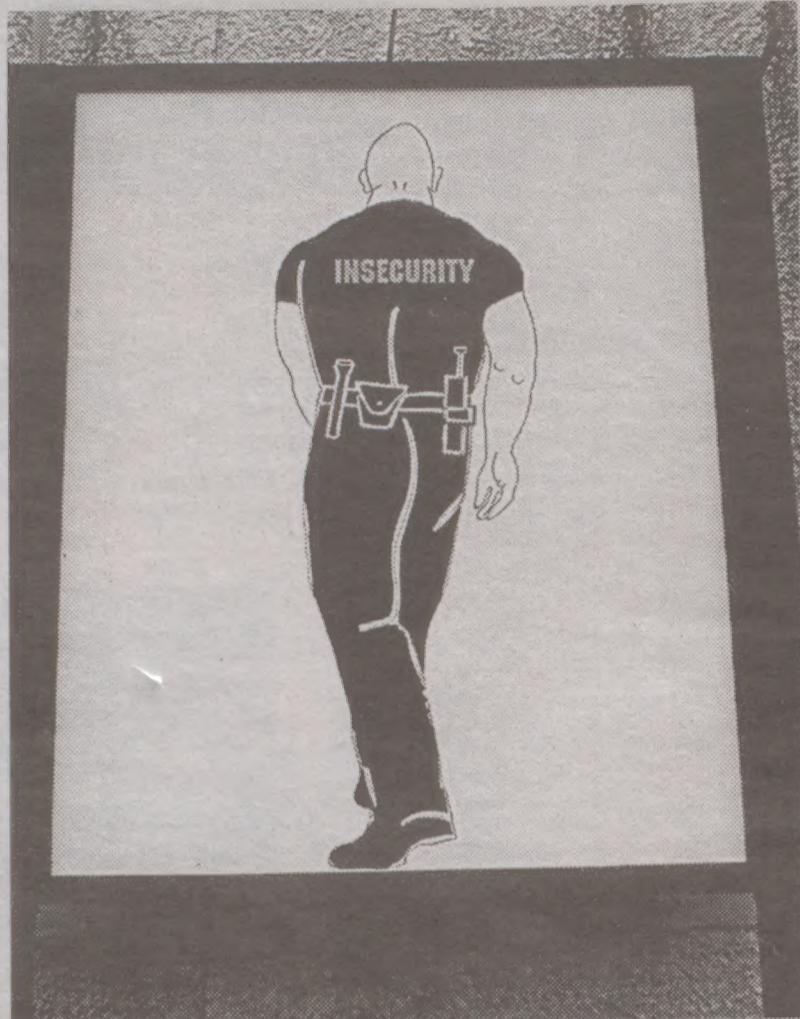
Quoting Mr. Shafer's paper concerning aggressive panhandlers ...if a panhandler approaches with menacing and threats, the police already have authorization to arrest the panhandler (under the criminal code) - so there is no need for new laws to control panhandlers...

Healthy Families

Healthy Families is one of several initiatives sponsored by Success By 6, a group representing United Way, community foundations, health, social services, police and business in Edmonton.

This new program is designed to provide support to overburdened families in the first years of their child's life. Beginning prenatally or at the birth of their first baby, families receive home visits which focus on parenting support and child development. The program is delivered by a partnership of Capital Health and three community agencies. Teams of family Visitors and Community Health Nurses are based at each site - Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Norwood Community Service Centre, and Terra.

In addition to the home visits, families are also connected to resources to cope with concerns such as finances, food, health issues, housing, or child care. For more information on **Healthy Families**, contact Capital Health at 413-7972.



This billboard in Winnipeg is in the Osborne Village community, where squeegee kids, panhandlers and homeless people have been persecuted the most.
PHOTO: Rodney Graham

Shafer's paper cites 'freedom of expression' as of utmost importance in a democratic society...what difference is there between a phone solicitation at mealtime and a request for help on the sidewalk - or a request for a charitable donation from a charity? Maybe the panhandlers way is better in a way, because at least you know your donation is going to someone you can see.

Quoting directly from Shafer's paper '...the criminalization of panhandling is not only an attack on the income of the beggars, it is an assault on their dignity and self respect, on their right to seek self realization through public interaction with their fellow citizens .. when we violate the liberty rights of even the most down-trodden members of society - we threaten the liberty rights of all.' Two key arguments here are ...the right to free speech and that the majority ought not tell the minority how to live their lives.

Power and Control More Important

The 'top down' idea is similar to the 'trickle down' methodology which the multi-nationals use to defend their right to virtually run countries and dictate their policies in every way, while their real motivation is profit, not social enhancement.

Top down, trickle down...some goon with a billy club relieving himself on the heads of the poor - that's what it amounts to.

It seems as if the leaders of our cities are more interested in..control, power, profit, than in freedom of expression, creativity, liberty, social conscience ...

Noam Chomsky, arguably the greatest advocate of free speech and justice for all in our culture said "...the more you can increase the fear of drugs and crime, welfare mothers, immigrants, and aliens, the more you control all the people ... ♦

Talking Back **TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.**
Call and leave your comment: 1-888-428-4001 Toll Free

Calling the malls about vendors

I would just like to say that I bought your paper and I think it's great. I also think that your vendors should be allowed to sell inside of malls and I'm going to call and let them know how I feel.

Anonymous.

Doing a great thing helping people

My comment on **Our Voice** is that I think you're doing a great thing to help out a lot of people to make some extra money. Please keep up the good work.

Anonymous

Profiling reformers?

I bought a copy of your newspaper from the fellow who sells at Save-On Foods on the southside and I can't believe you'd have a profile on Rahim Jaffer. I mean these reformers are so against poor people I can't believe it. You must have been hard up for somebody to write about.

Anonymous

Good-bye Calgary

Thank You Rick.

Our Voice since its beginning has been distributed to street vendors in Calgary as well as Edmonton. But, as of the first of this month, **Our Voice** will no longer have an office in Calgary.

Two years ago the Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS), which was our supporting agency, decided to part ways with **Our Voice**. CUPS set forth on their own Calgary street paper and have, since then, been publishing *Calgary Street Talk*. **Our Voice** decided to remain in Calgary because vendors still wanted to sell it specifically. A fellow by the name of Rick Whittaker, out of the kindness of his heart, took over our Calgary operations and continued working with the **Our Voice** vendors.

We eventually got ourselves an office thanks to the support of the Calgary Native Friendship Centre. But it has been two years now and *Calgary Street Talk* is still there and is serving most of the same vendors **Our Voice** served. They have an office with a staff and vendor programs focused on vendors in that city.

Our Voice can now focus fully on Edmonton. The publication has served its purpose in Calgary. We inspired their own locally focused street paper. We gave hundreds of vendors a means to an income and to self-expression for nearly five years.

We would like to thank all of those vendors for sharing their lives with us and for being part of **Our Voice**. Of course there is endless thanks to Rick whose work for us has been princely at small wages. It's people like him who make the difference in our world. Thank you, Rick.

We would like to wish *Calgary Street Talk* all of the best and demand that they do their best in continuing to serve the vendors.

And if need be, **Our Voice** can always go back.

Rainy Day hey?

Oberg to crack down on disabled "millionaires", a headline in last month's *Edmonton Journal* stated. Apparently seven of the some 23,000 Albertans who collect Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), have assets in the millions. Because of this, our Social Services Minister has decided that all AISH recipients or people applying for AISH must now have their bank accounts looked into in order to determine whether or not they need AISH benefits.

Persons who are on AISH already face limitations on how much they can earn before they are cut off. A single person on AISH can only earn \$165 per month before they are penalized. Beyond that they are allowed to keep only 25% of what they earn. It's a method of keeping the poor, poor.

So now disabled people can look forward to being under more intense scrutiny with this announcement from Social Services.

Oberg proposes to introduce what is called asset testing. This will determine benefits based on how much an AISH recipient has in the bank. However, advocates for the disabled worry that, in line with this government's history of unfair treatment of the poor, the new measure will be far too rigid and will further discriminate against disabled, poor people.

But this is all because of seven people who were discovered to have more than they may need in trust accounts, according to Oberg. So why wouldn't he just deal with the seven people, rather than messing around with the whole system and possibly making it harder for the rest to continue collecting benefits.

"The idea of a trust account is they save it for a rainy day," he told the media, "If you're on AISH perhaps that's the rainy day."

It's funny that he would say that. The Alberta government now has something like \$13 billion in the Heritage Trust fund on top of last year's 3 billion dollar surplus. Yet at the same time study after study in this province indicates that the number of people living in poverty is steadily rising. There are more and more homeless people, less affordable housing and every shelter in the province is full all of the time. According to the Edmonton Social Planning Council the number of personal bankruptcies increases yearly. So has the number of people who have their children taken away by Child Welfare, up by 48 percent. So if things are good in Alberta for a lot of people, they are just as bad for a lot of other people. It would seem that Alberta has a rainy day of its own to contend with. But for whatever reason, I highly doubt that any of the money stashed away in our government trust fund will be used to make the sun shine on Albertans who are poor. In all likelihood more looks to be taken away.

Michael Walters



"YUP - I NEVER THOUGHT I'D GET MYSELF A HIGHRISE APARTMENT."

Phone competition boosts friendship

Renewing old friendships, staying connected to people far away, feeling less lonely or isolated, there's a lot you can do with your telephone. This is more possible now with the popular \$20 flat-rate long distance. This new flat-rate is more than just a price cut forced by the tight competition in the long distance business. It's a change in the way we use the phone, and a change in the way we view our world.

The new urban myths are out there. The ones about people calling long distance for hours and hours, or just leaving a line open while they make dinner. But all those stories aside, the new flat rate is a huge boon to friends and families who simply like to stay connected.

Probably even more than the big I, the internet, this little change is already having a profound effect on society. Nearly everyone can use it to talk to anyone in the country, just as if it was a local call. This is a BIG change in communications for our society. Think of the closer connections to family and friends this change will encourage. "I'm getting to know my sister, again," said one woman.

The great increase in demand was a big strain on the lines, according to the telephone companies. So what? Increase the bandwidth, increase the capacity, put in the extra lines. Spend the money. This is something the customer obviously wants and appreciates.

Not everywhere in the world has free local calling, sometimes it costs each time you pick up the telephone. North American telephone companies may regret they ever opted for free local service. But we can't imagine having to pay for each and every call, now. Nor should we. Free local calls greatly affected modern society. So is this new change to "free" long distance.

And those poor giants of telecommunications may moan that this will cut into their profits. One long distance company has reportedly already put a 400 hour cap on "unlimited" calling. But let's not allow them to back away from this wonderful change. This is such an important service that we should insist they stick to it.

The companies may also threaten to raise local rates, your basic line rental charges. That would be unfortunate. Enough people already have trouble paying for basic telephone service. And, as anyone who has done without a phone will tell you, it is not pleasant. In fact, it is a sure way to stay mired at the bottom.

Whether the telecommunications giants should be allowed to nickel and dime us to keep up their profits is another question. Pay phone charges have apparently just jumped to 35 cents in Calgary and Red Deer and are soon to in Edmonton. Sometimes it was just hard enough to find a quarter when you needed one, let alone a quarter and a dime. But we'll leave that to the CRTC.

Meanwhile, call your friends, keep up the old connections, it's a new and smaller world.

Keith Wiley



This month

Real Change

the street paper in
Seattle, Washington

Real Change published its first issue in Seattle in August, 1994. They exist to be a political voice to the area's poor and homeless, and to create immediate, flexible employment vending the paper. In less than one year *Real Change* attained a monthly circulation of 20,000. There are approximately 150 people selling *Real Change* in Seattle which is sold for \$1, \$0.70 of which goes to the vendor.

The *Real Change* mission and goals are:

Organize, educate, and build alliances to find community-based solutions to homelessness and poverty.

- 1.) provide a foundation for grassroots organizing.
- 2.) publish the views of marginalized communities.
- 3.) create direct economic opportunity.
- 4.) build bridges with a broad range of allies in the struggle against poverty.

You can read more from Seattle at the website: www.realchangenews.org

Or follow the link from Our Voice's site at: www.planet.eon.net/~kwiley/voicehome.html



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FROM
Seattle's Real Change

Working Class Hero

The Legend of Joe Hill: Poet, Worker, Activist

by Elizabeth Romero
(Special to Real Change 03/98)

Before television took over our evenings and our minds, working people used to hang out in beer halls and exchange ideas. One of these ideas was the IWW - Industrial Workers of the World - One Big Union. This was a militant union which admitted workers regardless of race or gender, a radical concept back then.

Joe Hill, the great worker-poet, was an active member of this union. He wrote the lyrics of many of the labour songs of the period. These were published in the IWW's Little Red Song Book.

What Joe Hill had was a great voice; a voice that rose up out of who and what he was. According to him he was: "... just one of the rank and file - just a common Pacific Coast wharf-rat - that's all. I have always tried to be true to my friends and my class. What any outsider may think about me is no concern of mine."

His dry, humorous, no nonsense approach to class loyalty is what drew working people to him. "He loved us and was one of us. He hated the greed and corruption that causes us to be exploited and undermined."

Joe Hill saw people towing the company line and then getting tossed on the junk heap, their lives and bodies broken. He fought back by joining the One Big Union - the Wobblies. The Wobblies correctly ascertained that race and gender prejudice are the great dividers of wage workers. So these were forbidden in the One Big Union. The establishment hated the Wobblies. They were excellent organizers and quickly won unprecedented numbers to their union. The IWW told workers what they already knew: they were working hard under dangerous conditions for not enough pay. Their lives were held in contempt by the people who controlled them.

Concepts like these get people killed. Wesley Everest, an IWW organizer, was lynched in Centralia, Washington. You can read about it in a book called Centralia Dead March [Curbstone Press, 1983].

Mobilization for the First World War effectively

ended the Wobblies' power. It is, as you know, unpatriotic to stick up for poor people during time of war. Examining the mystery surrounding Joe Hill's arrest and execution is a good way of seeing how the chips were falling at the time. Apart from the fact that Joe Hill was not allowed counsel during his initial interrogation, there were a number of other glaring miscarriages of justice in the course of his trial. Joe Hill was accused of murdering a grocer named Morrison. He was arrested that night seven miles away and he had been shot in the chest. He said he had not received this injury at Morrison's store and indeed the trajectory of the bullet indicated that he had his hands up when he was shot. Yet this wound was the main evidence against him. In addition a young eye witness said when he first saw Joe Hill, "that's not him at all." The child later retracted this statement and said that it was Hill he had seen.

One thing that is especially curious is that Joe Hill made a specific request that all records relating to his trial be sent to the Chicago headquarters of the IWW. But as Philip Foner informs us in *The Letters of Joe Hill*: "The records Hill arranged to have deposited at the Chicago Headquarters of the IWW were seized in post-war raids by the federal government and have disappeared."

ashes to dust

Before he was executed, Joe Hill wrote to Bill Haywood, head of the IWW, saying: "Could you arrange to have my body hauled to the state line to be buried? I don't want to be found dead in Utah." Joe Hill was shot by the sovereign state of Utah and his body was sent to Chicago where 30,000 people turned out to mourn him.



Although he was executed in 1915, Joe Hill is known as the man who never died.

On the eve of his execution he wrote his last will: My will is easy to decide, For there is nothing to divide. My kin don't need to fuss and moan - "Moss does not cling to a rolling stone." My body? Ah, if I could choose, I would to ashes it reduce, And let the merry breezes blow My dust to where some flowers grow. Perhaps some fading flower then would come to life and bloom again. This is my last and final will, Good luck to all of you.

Certainly unions and the whole concept of poor people organizing and defending their rights could be seen as a fading flower. When we make it come to life and bloom again "tis there you'll find Joe Hill." ♦

Next month we will feature *These Homeless Whispers* in Champaign Illinois.

the street paper movement

NASNA

The North American Street Newspaper Association

and around the world is growing and working harder and more effectively at giving voice and power to those members of our society who find themselves marginalized in any shape or form.

The mission of the North American Street Newspaper Association is to support a street newspaper movement that creates and upholds journalistic and ethical standards while promoting self-help and empowerment among people living in poverty. ♦

The street paper movement in North America

Desmond Tutu impresses Edmonton

BY KASANDRA CALDWELL

In November, Desmond Tutu spoke before a sold out crowd at Edmonton's Jubilee Auditorium. It was on the last day of the United Nations Human Rights Conference, which had been held in our city. The Conference celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations Human Rights Declaration. Desmond Tutu is a well-educated, South African man of 68 years, and is also a Christian Archbishop. He was greatly instrumental in dissolving South Africa's racist political system, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for this in 1984. "Empilo" is Tutu's African name, meaning "life".

As he was introduced, Tutu remained smiling, happy. Remaining happy at all times is an accomplishment for an educated black man who lived during the era of Apartheid in South Africa.

At one point, the South African government investigated Tutu's church group for "subversive" activities. He said, "I want the government to know now and always that I do not fear them. They are trying to defend the utterly indefensible and they will fail."

"Like others who have done (evil) in the past, the Nazis, the Hitlers, the Amins of this world, they will end up as the flotsam and jetsam of history."

Desmond Tutu appeals to many people because he is a devoted Christian, educated in the Western world, and a great speaker. He has been an Archbishop since 1986. He currently teaches at a university in the United States. In his talk at the Jubilee Auditorium, he eloquently contrasted the ideals of Apartheid with those of Christianity.

Apartheid and racism are contrary to scripture, which is quite categorical about the nature of individuals. Racism denies the basic tenants of Jesus Christ, and is therefore evil. It causes unnecessary suffering for belonging to the wrong group. It causes starvation for both adults and children. It causes poor education. It causes there to be no land for Native Peoples. It causes no income for the unemployed and unemployable. It



deprives the prison population of the right to vote. It causes lynchings at churches. It causes phobia in Neo-Nazi Germany, England, and France. "Racism is not nice, it is not respectable."

On the other hand, the centre of the Christian faith is Jesus, who said, as he ascended the cross, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all to me". The fable of Adam and Eve describes our essential human nature. Adam was lonely. God offered him the companionship of all of the animals, but Adam did not want other creatures as a partner. So God produced a delectable creature, Eve. This shows that

"a person is a person through other persons". It is a fundamental law of our being that we are made for family, community, togetherness, friendship.

Racism makes a child doubt whether he is a child of God, creating negative feelings, black-on-black violence: "I hate myself and project that hatred on others who resemble me".

At the conclusion of his talk, Desmond Tutu said: I hope I have (reinforced) "your resolve...to oppose racism in all its manifestations (so that) this beautiful...Canada is totally free of pernicious evil". "Emerge...a passionate activist (for) the United Nations Human Rights", "so that everyone...in the world will enjoy their inalienable rights."

To children, Tutu asked, "don't succumb...emerge whole on the other side", despite the pressures of commercial advertisements, which tell us "that bigger and more necessarily are better". "Reach for the stars, the sky is the limit, it is possible to have a new kind of world...with more compassion, more gentleness, more caring, more laughter, more joy." As God's children, "Help me. Help me. Help me to realize my dream."

The University of Alberta's Aboriginal Student's representative told Tutu before his talk, "The new generation of Turtle Island (North America) offers you our respect and prayers." We are "weaving together our common threads humanity and love". "Respected elder, great warrior of peace...cast us your thread." And Tutu did, in his own memorable, historical way. ♦



In some of the city's poorest neighbourhoods

Neighbourhoods push to make the most of 2001 Track and Field Games in Edmonton

The 2001 World Track and Field games will be landing at Commonwealth Stadium, right in the middle of some of Edmonton's poorest neighbourhoods. While City leaders are touting the tremendous financial benefits from the games, what will the impact be on the people living near the Stadium?

"We're looking for the opportunities here," says Ele Gibson, from McCauley. Gibson was one of the representatives at a recent meeting between the neighbourhoods to discuss the games' impact on the area.

The neighbours have concerns and some hopes for the games. Among the hopes are new housing, built for the games, but designed to go on as a legacy of affordable, safe housing in the communities.

They are approaching the City for a community coordinator for planning for the games, and asking to be represented on high level planning for the event.

Expo 86 in Vancouver and the Olympic Games in Atlanta had big impacts on poor people. In Atlanta there was "street cleaning" to remove "undesirables". In Vancouver low-rent hotels and boarding houses kicked out poorer tenants and upgraded to take advantage of the hot market over the summer.

But in Edmonton, people are expecting less impact on housing in the neighbourhoods, and in fact are looking for some long-needed improvements, including cleaning up vacant homes and lots.

"We want to turn this into a win for the neighbourhoods, rather than a loss," says John Kolkman, a neighbourhood activist from McCauley. He says there is a particular opportunity to turn some of the derelict housing and vacant land in the inner city

neighbourhoods into good housing for the long term. While University area residents are concerned about athlete housing development in their area, the Norwood, McCauley and Boyle Street neighbourhoods would welcome new development. "We have a big problem with boarded up houses," says Kolkman. With the needed housing for athletes, there's the potential to develop good quality housing as a legacy of the games, Kolkman says.

There are tens of millions of dollars to be spent on developing games facilities and Kolkman says real thought should be given to using that investment to provide a long-lasting benefit to the communities. "You have to question spending priorities," he says. "Are we building sports monuments that the city will need to maintain on an on-going basis? Commonwealth Stadium is greatly under-used, Kolkman said, but costly to maintain. "Our concern is not so much the ten days or so of the games. Our concerns are long-term."

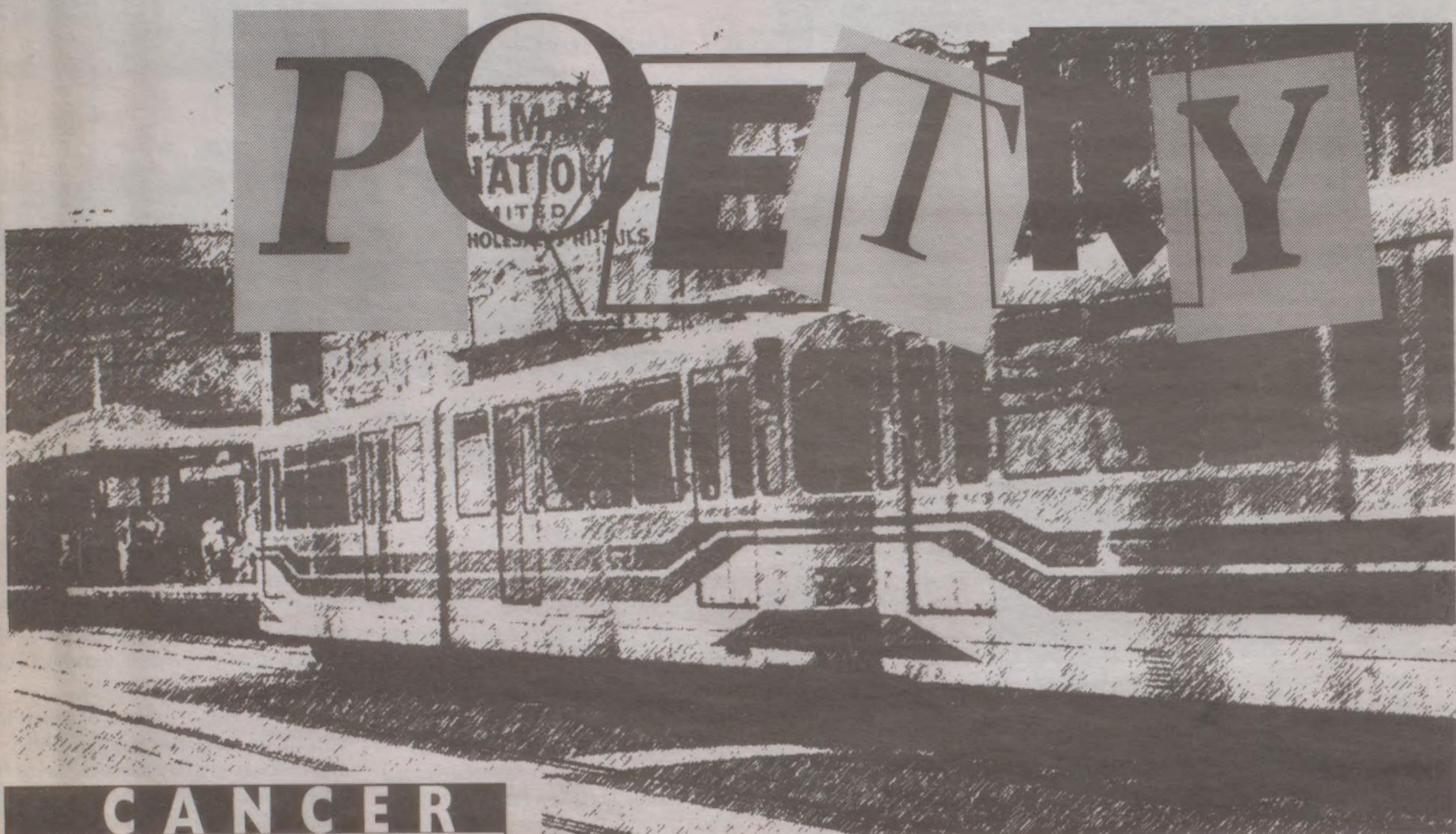
Some of the proposed developments are already a concern for the community representatives. A Media Centre is slated for the current tennis court and park area near Commonwealth Stadium. The neighbours wonder what its use will be after the games, and if the park area will be used up permanently with no great advantage.

An upgrade to artificial turf and other improvements for the old Clarke Stadium alongside Commonwealth Stadium, also raise worries. Kolkman says there was a commitment to tear Clarke Stadium down when Commonwealth was built, but it's still there. Will improvements to Clarke lead to more use of the old stadium in the future, with heavier traffic, and noise from loudspeakers?

The 2001 games are touted as a big economic boost for Edmonton. Will it mean more to our poorer neighbourhoods than a \$7 an hour job for three weeks?

Keith Wiley ♦





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Light from Nelson Mandela

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light
not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves: who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, fabulous?

Actually who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.
Your playing small does not serve the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking
so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We were born to manifest
the glory of God
that is within us.
It's not just in some of us,
it's in everyone.
And, as we let our own light shine
we consciously give other people
permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our fear,
our presence automatically
liberates others.

An excerpt from Nelson Mandela's Inaugural
Speech upon becoming president of South
Africa.

People in the middle of
people around them

by Michael Flowercloud

In life we cry for what is wilted at our feet
and we walk beyond our understanding,
hoping to find a greater peace in our
own hearts
as we blindly see the emptiness
we leave behind.

In life we reach for heavens true and good
and we forget the hands that gave us life,
wanting more than innocent beauties
as we fall, merely human, capriciously
captured by our own bodies

and as we drift on
through these fearful ages,
we seek fearless moments
for to stand tall,
to suckle the pride
in how we feel about who we are.

THE DISABILITY REPORT

BY I. FOORD

To understand disability in Alberta, it is helpful to understand the income system which supports it. The Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) was instituted in 1970. There are currently 22,289 persons with disabilities on AISH in Alberta. The Minister of Social Services recently stated that AISH clients are increasing at the rate of 160 to 180 per month. However, there are reports of people waiting for more than two years to get on AISH.

By Alberta standards, the AISH income is princely at \$824.00 per month. However, much of this income goes on rent, as there is an appalling shortage of affordable housing. The Dependent Handicapped, who have no voice in the community and who have no one to speak for them, are the most ravaged by rent. Many pay \$400.00-\$1200 a month for rent in group homes. Landlords renting to group homes easily earn \$1,600.00 a month or more, for modest dwellings often in inconvenient locations. These rents are determined by Social Services and are making the rich richer. A proposed City of Edmonton by-law seeks to restrict the number of group homes in any neighbourhood.

The handsome AISH income is further corroded by health care costs. Until recently, AISH had a comprehensive package of health benefits. This has been completely gutted in the past two years. Persons disabled must now pay for everything from analgesics to white canes. Diabetic supplies alone cost \$60.00 a month and many health care costs are significantly higher. A search in the Legislature library failed to produce any Bill, Act or discussion in the Assembly or any press coverage regarding these cuts. It seems they were made by a unilateral and arbitrary decision. This is precisely the kind of decision which the government claims to abhor. In theory, persons disabled can get health items from the Aids to Daily Living (ADL) program. In reality, ADL must serve 65,000 Albertans and has an annual budget of only 55 million. This program routinely refers persons disabled to the charities, who routinely refer them back to the program. Aids to Daily Living is a flop. Its funding and staffing needs to be doubled.

Overpayments take another terrible toll on AISH income. Section 9 of the AISH Act contains an overpayment clause. Social Services seizes 3 million dollars a year from its clients. Everything from oil royalties to Bingo winnings is expropriated. All interest is seized and Work for Welfare income is subject to seizure. The federal Child Tax Credit is unexempt. Disabled workers on AISH bear the brunt of these seizures. All Canada Pension is confiscated, including the generous commencement payment. Workers refusing to give up this lump sum are plunged into debt and are forced to pay it off in installments. It is quite common for a worker with an income of \$9,998.00 per year to be \$5,000.00 in debt to Social Services. Roughly 50% of persons on AISH collect 2/3 of their income from Canada Pension. This represents considerable savings to the province. A further revenue cushion is provided by federal disability transfer payments. There is absolutely no recognition of the Disability Dividend in the Annual Reports of Social Services. This insulting oversight fails to acknowledge the considerable contribution workers disabled make to their upkeep.

The pursuit of overpayments is relentless. Documents are demanded, pennies are counted, income is monitored, files are scrutinized, eligibility is reviewed, court action is taken, debt notices are sent and homes are scoured. Most AISH clients report that the only service they receive from their workers is the occasional income verification. Canada Pension provides this information with an 800 number. This program does not review files, litigate, set thresholds, create debt, enter homes or threaten the termination of benefits for specious and insignificant reasons. Canada Pension is currently under review. It isn't broken, so why fix it?

There is an urban myth in Alberta, promoted by the government. It claims that 30,000 persons were cut from the Support for Independence program. The actual figure, gleaned from the Annual Reports of Social Services, is 59,623. On Dec. 3, 1998 the Minister swore in the Assembly that the savings from these excisions were being directed into AISH. There is no evidence of this. Ten years ago, an \$8.00 increase was gobbled up by a rise in utility costs. A \$5.00 increase a year ago was lost to a surcharge on prescriptions.

The Alberta opposition has been flooded with information about AISH overpayments, debts and insufficiency along with evidence of harassment, intimidation and intrusion. In the past two sessions of the Assembly, disability has been mentioned precisely three times: once by Linda Sloan and twice by Gary Dickson. Mr. Dickson recently exposed the fact that the Provincial Mental Health Advisory Committee has a surplus of 20 million dollars. Meanwhile, there isn't a psychiatric bed to be had.

15,000 persons with disabilities are totally dependent on a disabled transportation system which is over-booked, under-staffed and under-funded. The City of Edmonton Advisory Board on Services to Persons with Disabilities gets more complaints about DATS than about any other service.

Remedies are in order. An Alberta Human Rights Tribunal on disability is overdue. Reparations for income seized by Social Services should be made in the form of a \$100.00, a month increase in the AISH allowance. A petition should be circulated demanding an end to the AISH overpayment clause. An amnesty on AISH debt should be declared. AISH should be re-tooled along the lines of the cost-effective and non-intrusive Canada

Pension Disability Program. Better yet, scrap AISH and replace it with a Guaranteed Annual Income. In the words of a correspondent to a national weekly, this would eliminate "self serving bureaucrats and their suffocating red tape". A federal Ministry of Housing should be created to pick up the affordable housing ball fumbled by the provinces. DATS and Aids to Daily Living need a massive infusion of cash.

Persons with disabilities face many obstacles in Alberta. The greatest of these is silence. ♦

*Figures come from the Government of Alberta Social Services annual reports available at the Public and Legislature Libraries.



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JOHN'S STYLE FILE**Jackie Fiala**

John Zapantis
Our Voice vendor, writer and
photographer meets the most
interesting people.

Jackie Fiala, a Métis woman discovered her unique talent for stone carving while working as a youth worker at a young offender's centre. It was during this time that Jackie enrolled in a stone carving course.

Content with her own progress with her skills to bring stone to life, she felt the need to introduce the therapeutic craft to the young offenders.

"I think that the stone carving allowed the youths to honestly be able to articulate in stone, their feelings. It was a very self satisfying thing. They did it for themselves and for the love of carving," says Jackie.

"I believe that stone carving is very



therapeutic and as long as an individual is expressing what they truly feel, it's rehabilitation."

Our Voice asked Jackie Fiala, as a role model for anyone who'd one day aspire to walk in her shoes, what words of optimism would you give them?

"I'm just going to simply say it in a quotation by Joseph Cambell, a man I really admire: "Follow your Bliss". ♦

WORDS ON THE STREET**Food Not Bombs feeding the hungry**

STORY & PHOTO JOHN ZAPANTIS

A group of people who call themselves Food Not Bombs, set up shop at the West Edmonton Centre underground L.R.T. pedway on Saturday November 17 and served warm pre-cooked vegetarian meals to anyone in need.

The local group of youngsters adopted the ideas and teachings from the international anti-nuclear organization by the same name, that makes its origins in the United States.

The international grass roots non-profit organiza-

tion recycles food thrown out by major grocery stores and routinely supplements food to social organizations.

The Edmonton group has been visiting places like the Boyle Street Co-op since 1993. Today in Edmonton, however, the ideology of the group has changed in hopes of raising public awareness of poverty in Edmonton. So Food Not Bomb's prime objective is to bring their meals out into the open, in public places so that people who are better off cannot avoid the fact that poverty exists in our society.

Camilla Ingr is the public spokesperson of the Edmonton Chapter. She heads the organization's public awareness campaign while bringing food out to the people on the street.

Our Voice
the spare change magazine

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Our Voice
the spare change magazine

- A look at family violence and finding peace.
- Globalization. The New Evil?
- New fiction from Allison Kydd

"One of the purposes of Food Not Bombs is to bring the invisible homeless into the public eye, so they just can't forget about it," she says.

Chris Germain volunteers for Food Not Bombs and is a second year student at the University of Alberta.

"I always said that when I went to university that I would try to do things for people and hopefully keep doing it the rest of my life. I have a friend who's here. So at least I know someone. It's cool."

Richard Paul is unemployable. His reasons for coming are obvious.

"Some people can come down here to enjoy themselves, but like a lot of people I don't have a lot of places to go and eat. It's a free meal." ♦

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IN EDMONTON

Victor Jones

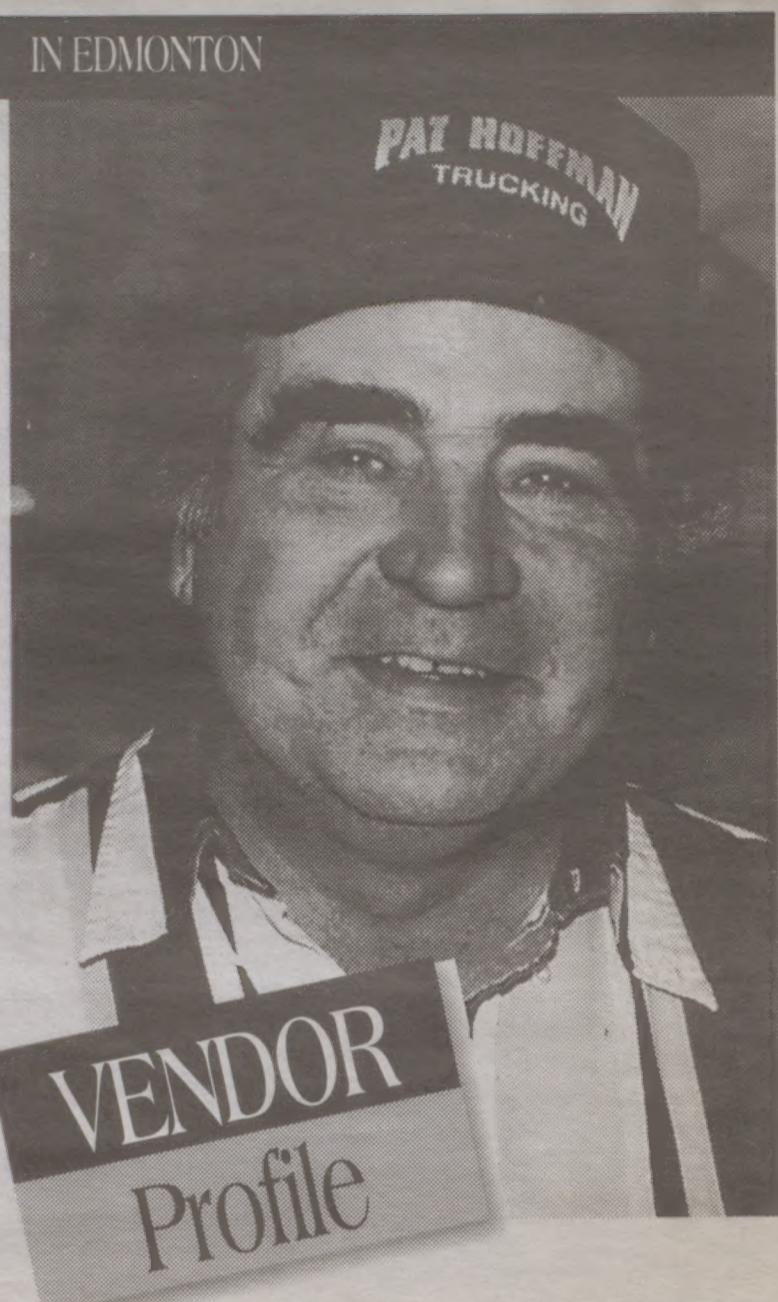
Victor Jones has been selling Our Voice since June of 1996. He is one of Our Voice's most consistent vendors, selling every day including week-ends.

For Victor, Our Voice gives him a decent place to live, food to eat and a productive way to spend his days.

He is eternally friendly to his customers and his glowing smile never leaves his face.

Victor would like to thank all those folks who buy the paper from him and wish them all the best in 1999.

Victor can be found selling at 105 St. and Whyte Avenue in front of the big book store, or 101A St. and 102 Ave in front of Edmonton Centre's south doors, or week-ends at Highland Foods on 90 St. and Jasper Avenue. ♦



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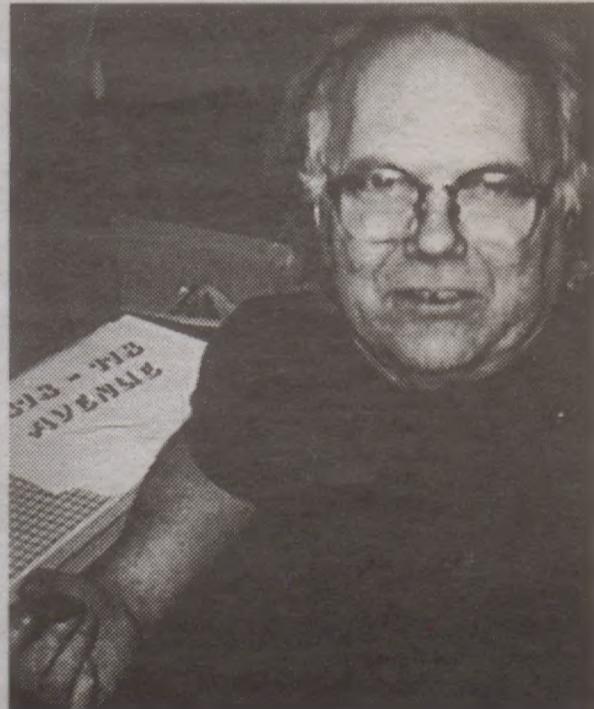


CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

Nestor Maksymiuk

January's Citizen of the Month is Nestor Maksymiuk. Nestor has been volunteering at the Bissell Centre for the past five years. He helps out in mostly all areas of the Bissell Centre including administration, the food room, E.C.S.S., the drop-in, the day-care and even with Our Voice. Congratulations to Nestor and thank you for all of your hard work.

If you know of anyone who is a wonderful citizen, whether it be volunteer or otherwise, and you think they should be the *Our Voice/Cafe Mosaics' Citizen of the Month*, please let us know. ♦



Cafe Mosaics

**Our Voice Magazine
and Cafe Mosaics'**
Citizen of the Month

EVERY MONTH in Our Voice, we will be featuring someone who has gone the extra mile in their lives or in their careers to make a difference in the lives of those

who are less fortunate.

The *Citizen of the Month* will receive a dinner for two courtesy of the Garneau Cafe' Mosaics on Whyte Avenue.

One day Dad finally came home. But it wasn't Dad. Dad looked just like himself. But he talked differently, he was very cranky, and angry a lot. It wasn't Dad, not like he used to be.

From a loved one's perspective, living with a person who has suffered from a brain injury can be devastating. "Dad" may have been in a car accident, an industrial accident, or suffered a stroke, but the complications from a brain injury can be far-reaching and life long not just for "Dad", but for the whole family.

At the Northern Alberta Brain Injury Society, there's support for people and families reeling under the shock of an injury. A big change in that most crucial part of the body, the brain, poses huge challenges for people surviving brain injury.

George Majeed is a regular client at NABIS and talks eagerly about all the help he has received there. He's an enthusiastic endorser of the program. Just three years ago, George was a professional engineer, with a business, a family and in the prime of his life. But a serious car accident put George into a Hell he won't forget.

He was badly hurt in the accident and the doctor told George's wife to bring in the kids. They weren't sure he was going to make it. But he did. George survived three bouts of surgery, removing his spleen, his gall bladder and repairing parts of his intestine. He had extensive internal injuries. But it was also his head. George had vision problems and headaches. Over three months his brain became swollen and **George experienced a severe bout of amnesia.** He didn't recognize his wife and family and he didn't understand where he was. George says he was terrified. That period was the worst Hell. "I was afraid of my family, of the people dressed in white," George says. Fear has been with George ever since. He lost the ability to speak in all of the nine languages he had spoken before. George said he spoke a different language that no one understood. "Yet you hear talking and not understanding what people are saying," says George.

"What hurt most was when I was told I'd broken two ribs of a guard and had injured a doctor," George said. "It's not real," he remembers. "So much uncertainty. Now they are tying you up, and what's next?"

But after three weeks, George pulled out of it in the hospital. "One day I woke up and said, 'where am I?'. Two security guards and a nurse were there. They said I was in a hospital. I asked why I was tied down. Finally, I acknowledged my wife. I was scared to hell,"

If Hell was like that I don't want to go there.

George Majeed talks about his experience of Brain injury and how NABIS, the Northern Alberta Brain Injury Society, helped him.

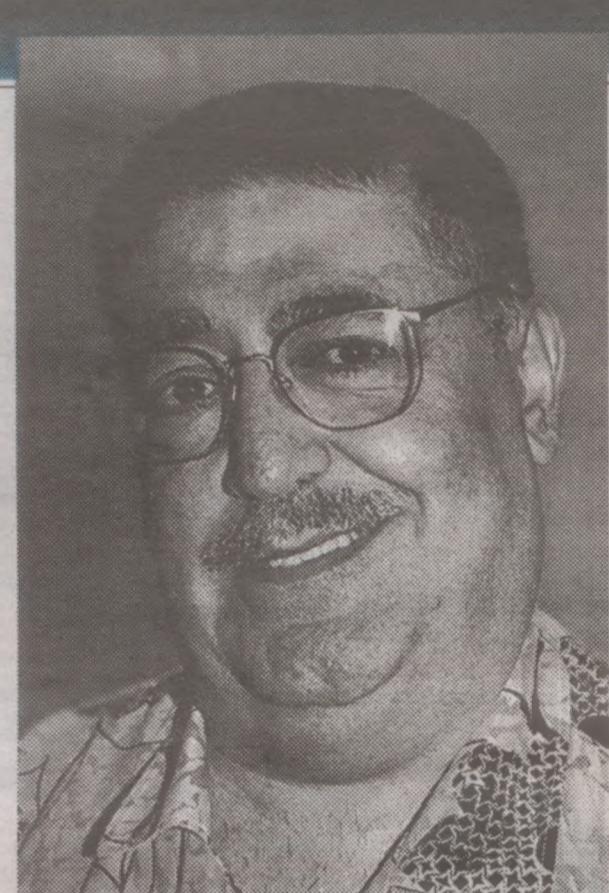
Keith Wiley, stories & photos

says George. He wondered, "Is this real? Is this the other life? If Hell was like that I don't want to go there."

George recovered gradually. "Little by little, through therapy I had to learn to speak, to walk again." At first Arabic, his mother tongue, came back. Then, he says, he learned English again. At NABIS George receives extensive counseling support, and work in groups with other people going through the experience of brain injury. He's gradually been putting his life back together. It's unlikely he will be an engineer again, but he's proud of the challenges he's faced and overcome.

George experienced big personality changes, as do many people who have suffered from brain injury. "Everyone in my family and all my friends noticed personality changes," George says. "I was most comfortable hiding on the sofa, holding on to the sofa." He experienced a great deal of anger and frustration too, like most people recovering. "I used language that wasn't in my vocabulary, obscenities, there was lots of hatred and mistrust. And I had very low self-esteem. You try to talk to your friends and they shy away from you. They run away from you."

"You lose your identity," George explains. "The George who is talking to you is the new me. I am



learning and creating myself until I die." And George is recovering much better than many injured people. So well in fact that a team of neurologists is studying him. After each cat scan that shows his brain is still shrinking, George says, a team of psychologists and neurologists talk to him to try to find out how he is teaching the rest of his brain to take over so much.

Still, dealing with everyday life is a challenge. Banking, for example, can be a problem. George says he has an Interac card, but he is unable to learn how to use it. At the bank they told him to use the card, instead of going to the teller, but George, who looks and talks very normally, can't do it. One time a teller took him to the machine and said very loudly, "You put the card in here." George had to explain again, "I am brain injured, not deaf." Finally the bank manager gave him a note to get special teller service.

George says he has found great support through NABIS, and it has really helped him feel better about himself. While still in hospital he started an art and painting group with his fellow patients. He feels people with brain injuries should stick together and can learn a lot from each other, and help each other a great deal.

George's family is not thrilled about his role as an outspoken person with a brain injury. "They always ask me, 'why do you have to talk about it?'" he says. "I have to advocate for NABIS," he says. He wants there to be a wider understanding of people with brain injury, and he knows NABIS is helping to do that, and has helped him a great deal. ♦

**N
A
B
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S**

Working to give brain injury survivors dignified and happy lives

Rachel Gietz at the Northern Alberta Brain Injury Society (NABIS) says that 86% of married people who suffer brain injury end up divorcing their spouses. Some severely injured people never make it back to the relationship. Gietz is a case worker at NABIS where the work is mainly with mild to moderately injured people who are re-adjusting to society.

After an injury, survivors often lose many of their skills, sometimes even the ability to walk and talk. Others lose social skills, or the ability to control frustration and anger. As Gietz says, "every individual is

different." Often for survivors with families, the spouses and children end up taking far more responsibility than they had before. It can be a tremendous strain.

Relationships are just part of it, there are big financial strains too. Most people with significant injuries do not return to work. One to two percent make it in the labour market, Gietz says, although many are very competent workers. Marjorie Rowe, a NABIS client, worked for 16 years in childcare, and received a certificate in Early Childhood from Grant MacEwan College. She recovered from a severe brain injury when she was just 16. She says she had to learn to walk, and talk, even to crawl again. But she went on to raise four children.

CONTINUED see NABIS inside on page 3



Survivor Marjorie Rowe